



**U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement**

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# News Release

## **Leaders of visa fraud scheme sentenced to three years in prison** *Brothers recruited Americans to travel to Vietnam to engage in sham marriages*

TACOMA, Wash. — Two Vancouver-area brothers who masterminded an elaborate marriage fraud scheme have been sentenced to three years in prison following a multi-agency investigation headed by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Loc Huu Nguyean, 40, and Phuoc Nguyen, 43, were each sentenced today in Tacoma for conspiracy to commit visa fraud and conspiracy to commit money laundering. At the sentencing, U.S. District Judge Ronald B. Leighton noted that the scheme harmed numerous people and told the brothers he hoped the sentences would deter others from similar conduct.

The ICE-led investigation, dubbed Operation Pit Boss because many of the phony fiancés were recruited at area casinos, also involved agents from the U.S. Department of State and the Washington State Gambling Commission.

According to court documents, the six primary ringleaders in Operation Pit Boss recruited U.S. citizens to travel to Vietnam to enter into fake marital engagements with Vietnamese nationals. As part of the scheme, the Vietnamese nationals paid \$20,000 to \$30,000 for non-immigrant visas authorizing their entry into the United States. The U.S. citizen recruits, who received up to \$1,500 and travel expenses, wrote fake “love letters” and staged photos with the Vietnamese nationals to make the relationships appear real. Some recruits who refused to participate after traveling to Vietnam were threatened or intimidated by members of the conspiracy.

The investigation revealed that Loc Huu Nguyen first hatched the conspiracy in 2000, when his pool hall in Vancouver, Washington, was failing. A friend agreed to pay Loc Nguyen \$15,000 if he would marry his niece in Vietnam so she could come to the United States. Over the next four years, the two men, together with their sisters, Amanda and Monica Nguyen, recruited more than 130 young Americans to pose as fiancés to commit visa fraud.

In asking for a significant prison term for the ringleaders, prosecutors pointed out that investigators believe 50 to 60 Vietnamese nationals illegally entered the United States as a result of the scheme. Due to the developing nature of relations between the United States and Vietnam, only one of the scheme’s beneficiaries has been deported so far. Moreover, the fraud scheme prompted the State Department to temporarily stop approving all fiancé visas from Vietnam, resulting in a three-year backlog of applications.

In addition to the Nguyen brothers, other conspirators have already been sentenced. Monica Nguyen was sentenced to ten months in prison, three years of supervised release, and a \$2,000 fine. Amanda Nguyen was sentenced to eight months in prison, a \$2,000 fine, and three years of supervised release. One of the imposter fiancés has already been sentenced, and others are being prosecuted. Ryan Daniels, 28, of Puyallup, Washington, was sentenced to four months of electronic home monitoring and two years of probation.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*